



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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By Tech. Sgt. N. Alicia Halla/176th Wing Public Affairs

## **Governor Walker sends Alaska Air National Guard in advance of Hurricane Florence**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Thirty-six Alaska Air Guardsmen of the 176th Wing and approximately three short tons of Alaska Air Guard equipment departed JBER Sep. 12 to assist emergency response efforts for Hurricane Florence, the Category 4 storm off the East Coast.

With less than a day's notice, members of the 176th Operations, Maintenance and Mission Support Groups, along with supporting personnel, moved into action to get the team stationed close to the affected area to be ready to assist their fellow Americans.

"Our airmen are always ready to support disaster relief in and out of state," said Brig. Gen. Darrin Slaten, commander of the 176th Wing. "The challenging environment we train in here in Alaska and our unique set of capabilities makes us a great fit for responses across the United States and in the Pacific. While specific states have not yet asked for assistance, we can shift our training area to a spot that we can respond from more quickly."

The team from the wing will join members of the New York and California Air National Guard units.

The Alaskans flew a C-17 Globemaster III from the 144th Airlift Squadron, with Guardian Angel personnel, a rescue vehicle, raft and alert equipment, to Moffett AFB, California. There, California Air Guardsmen will board before meeting the rest of the team at Dover AFB, Delaware.

The remaining Airmen, to include HH-60 Pave Hawk aircrew, maintenance and other support personnel, traveled on a 211th Rescue Squadron HC-130J Combat King II headed to Dover AFB to await specific relief effort tasks.

"Everything is going to depend on what that storm does," said Lt. Col. Matthew Komatsu, a combat rescue officer with the Alaska National Guard and Guardian Angel mission commander. "That's why we're leaning forward and getting there early so that as the storm figures things out, we can dial in right behind it — to get in there and rescue people."

Guardian Angel Teams comprise a combat rescue officer and a pararescueman who have specialized medical training, which can be especially beneficial during a natural disaster and its aftermath.

The National Guard works as part of an integrated federal, state and local network, supporting civil authorities during emergency response efforts.

"The National Guard is always ready to serve the nation," Komatsu said. "I think what makes this wing special is we have a really aggressive team that just wants to get the mission done. We don't care if it's 4,000 miles away or four miles away, we are here to help people wherever they're at."

Alaska Governor Bill Walker expressed solidarity with fellow state governors.

"Alaskans stand in support for those who are bracing themselves for Hurricane Florence," Walker said. "I extend to the East Coast the Alaskan spirit of pulling together and offering help in a time of need. May God watch over our National Guard members, and all who are impacted by Hurricane Florence."

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## PHOTOS

1. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (May not be accessible from all military computers.)

<https://flic.kr/s/aHsmpWdmxT>



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Alaska Air National Guard Airmen of 176th Wing load a Guardian Angel Air-Deployable Rescue Vehicle and an inflatable raft onto a 144th Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III Sept. 12, 2018 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Thirty-six Alaska Air National Guardsmen departed in support of the Hurricane Florence humanitarian assistance effort. The governors of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland

declared a state of emergency Sept. 10 as Hurricane Florence approaches the East Coast. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



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U.S. Air Force Troy Kennedy, a Regular Air Force crew chief with the 703rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, conducts preflight checks on a 144th Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III Sept. 12, 2018 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Thirty-six Alaska Air National Guardsmen departed in support of the Hurricane Florence humanitarian assistance effort. The governors of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland declared a state of emergency Sept. 10 as Hurricane Florence approaches the East Coast. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



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A 211th Rescue Squadron HC-130J Combat King II taxis Sept. 12, 2018 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Thirty-six Alaska Air National Guardsmen departed in support of the Hurricane Florence humanitarian assistance effort. The governors of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland declared a state of

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